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AUTHOR Packard, Suzanne Bradford
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ABSTRACT

This report is an evaluation of an exploratory program in foreign languages called "Foreign Language Appreciation" (F.L.A.), which has been implemented in several schools in Baltimore County, Maryland. Questionnaires designed to evaluate the program in general were sent to F.L.A. teachers; questions concentrated on the areas of organization and curriculum. Questionnaires were also sent to current and former students in one school in order to ascertain their reactions to the program. The results showed an overall satisfaction with and approval of the F.L.A. program on the part of both teachers and students. Some problem areas that needed consideration were: (1) the current curriculum guide; (2) certain organizational and scheduling patterns; (3) the need for uniformity among teachers in the maintenance of classroom discipline and correlation of materials selected; (4) the need for additional materials; (5) the mandatory aspect of the program. Some strong points were identified, such as the greater number of students exposed to the cultures and languages of other countries and the improved ability of a student to form a preference for a language to be studied in the future. The questionnaires and a statistical interpretation of the responses are given in appendices. (CFM)

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AN EVALUATION OF

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE APPRECIATION PROGRAM

IN

BALTIMORE COUNTY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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Suzanne Bradford Packard
Phase II Project Report
Spring, 1976

FL008306

1. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Over the past few years Baltimore County has been implementing an exploratory program in foreign languages in several area schools. The program is known as "Foreign Language Appreciation" (FLA). Having been a member of the team of teachers who prepared the first curriculum guide for the course, as well as having taught the program for the past few years, I have had a keen interest in studying the impact and ramifications of the F.L.A. program for both teachers and students in Baltimore County.

The Coordinator and Supervisor of foreign languages in the county share my interest as well as my observation of a need for an evaluation of the F.L.A. program to date in order to make available to the students the best exploratory program possible.

2. DEFINING THE OBJECTIVES

My objectives were to develop questionnaires as a means of receiving input from teachers and students in the program, to distribute and collect the questionnaires, to collate the data received, and to evaluate various parts of the F.L.A. program in light of the input received.

3. THE STRATEGY FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM

My strategy was to discuss with the Coordinator and Supervisor of foreign languages the aspects of the F.L.A. program which should be studied, to develop and distribute the student and teacher questionnaires, to collate and record information received from the questionnaires, to study and analyze this information, and finally to make evaluations of various parts of the program, as per student and teacher reactions and observations. I selected this strategy because I felt it was a direct and efficient method of accomplishing my objectives.

4. THE PROJECT DESIGN

Teacher Questionnaires

During a meeting of teachers of foreign languages in Baltimore County, held on March 11, 1976, I distributed and requested teachers who have been teaching F.L.A. to complete a questionnaire designed to evaluate the exploratory program in general. Questions concentrated on the areas of organization and curriculum. The Coordinator and Supervisor of foreign languages lent their support to the successful completion of the project.

Student Questionnaires

In order to better ascertain their reactions to the F.L.A. program, I prepared a questionnaire for current students of F.L.A. as well as one for former students of the program at Ridgely Junior High School, Lutherville, Md. I explained the intent of the questionnaires to teachers involved in the

program at Ridgely, and requested them to distribute, collect, and return the questionnaires to me. In my evaluation of the impact of the F.L.A. program on students, I took into consideration the fact that these were only the composite reactions of one group of students versus the reaction of all students involved in the program throughout the County.

Collation of Data

I studied the responses to the questionnaires as they were received and again after all were returned. In order to collate a larger number of teacher questionnaires, I sent reminders to teachers who had not returned their questionnaires. I was alert to any consensus of opinion regarding different aspects of the program, and to any factors which appeared to consistently affect the program in a negative or positive manner.

Formation of Evaluation of Program

I made some conclusions about the F.L.A. program and made evaluations of parts of the program as per the statistics resulting from responses to the questionnaires. These have been included in responses to the questions asked in section 7, "Evaluating the Project Results" and in Appendices A, B, and C.

Discussions

I have discussed the input from the questionnaires as well as my observations and evaluations of the F.L.A. program, based on the questionnaires, with Dr. Richard McCaslin, principal of Ridgely Junior High School, with the members of the foreign language department of Ridgely, and have made arrangements to discuss the same with the Coordinator of Foreign Languages of Baltimore County, Mr. Arthur L. Micozzi and with the Supervisor of Foreign Languages, Mr. John S. Harrison.

5. THE REQUIRED INPUTS

Human Efforts

The human efforts needed were those of myself, of fellow foreign language teachers, of junior high school students, and of the Coordinator and Supervisor of Foreign Languages.

Facilities and Materials

The main facility consulted was the Office of Foreign Languages of Baltimore County. The materials involved were the student and teacher questionnaires.

The Time Frame (March 11, 1976 - May 20, 1976 - approximate dates)

Weeks 1 and 2 - prepare questionnaires and distribute to teachers and students

Weeks 3 and 4 - await return of questionnaires; study results as they come in; send reminders to teachers not having returned their questionnaires.

Weeks 5 and 6 - collate data and start evaluations.

Week 7 - identify recurring reactions, common problems, strengths in the program, etc. and formulate statistics for evaluation.

Week 8 - submit final report.

6. EXECUTING THE PROJECT

I executed the strategy as outlined within the general limits of the time frame.

7. EVALUATING THE PROJECT RESULTS

Evaluating the Project Results

I asked and answered the following questions in order to evaluate the project results: (Please refer to Appendices A, B, and C for a detailed statistical interpretation of the questionnaires).

1) Was I able to evaluate the impact of F.L.A. on teachers? Yes, this objective was accomplished and teachers' reactions were able to be defined in the following areas:

A. Helpfulness of the curriculum guide, Meeting Another Culture Through Language

B. Problem areas within the F.L.A program in general

C. Strong points within the F.L.A. program in general

D. Strengths and weaknesses of the various organizational programs employed in the schools

E. Opinions regarding the F.L.A. program, per se.

2) Was I able to evaluate the impact of F.L.A. on students? Yes, this objective was accomplished and student reactions were able to be defined in the following areas:

A. Enjoyment of the exposure to the F.L.A. program

B. Facilitation in their future choice of a language course selection based on their exposure to the F.L.A. program.

C. Opinions regarding the organizational pattern offered at Ridgely Junior High School.

D. Areas for possible change within the content of the program.

E. Favorite activities within the F.L.A. program.

F. Suggestions for types of foreign language programs to be offered.

G. Expectations and reactions to Level I programs in foreign language as a result of exposure to the F.L.A. course.

3) Were any widespread and recurrent reactions expressed and noted? Yes, this objective was accomplished and an overall satisfaction with and approval of the F.L.A. program was expressed by both teachers and students.

4) Were any definite areas for need for modification identified? Yes, this objective was accomplished and the following areas of the program were defined as being in need of consideration for possible modification:

A. The curriculum guide, Meeting Another Culture Through Language, could be modified to be of more help to a larger number of teachers.

B. Certain organizational patterns and scheduling patterns could be modified.

C. The possibilities of reaching the objectives of the F.L.A. program, while working with the ability and/or motivational level of the students, could be studied further for alleviation of problems.

D. The uniformity among teachers of maintenance of classroom discipline and correlation of material selected to be taught to students could be studied further.

E. The materials available for the program could be increased i.e., appropriate textbooks, audiovisual materials, art supplies, etc.

F. The mandatory aspect of the F.L.A. program in some situations could be studied further.

5) Were any changes able to be effected as a result of a clarification of a need for such changes? No, this objective was not accomplished due to the fact that it should have been placed in the part of the project entitled, "Follow-Up Activities."

6) Were any strong points in the program identified? Yes, this objective was accomplished and the following were defined as strengths:

A. A greater number of students are exposed to the culture and language of other countries.

B. Students are better able to form a preference for a language to be chosen in future course selections as a result of exposure to the F.L.A. program.

C. A maximization of the, "I can...," attitude of students is often achieved in the program.

D. The teacher is afforded an excellent opportunity for creativity, resourcefulness, and imagination in the implementation of the F.L.A. program.

Evaluating the Process Results

I asked and answered the following questions in order to evaluate the process results:

1) Did teachers return questionnaires promptly and with adequate information? Yes, this objective was accomplished and teachers returned questionnaires within a reasonable amount of time and their responses were very helpful in the evaluation of the F.L.A. program.

2) Did students answer the questionnaires candidly and were their responses helpful in determining any general effects of the program? Yes, this objective was accomplished and students were very frank in their responses to questions and their input was very beneficial in the program evaluation.

3) Was I able to obtain adequate information from the chosen questions in the questionnaires to form an evaluation? Yes, this objective was accomplished and the questions included in the questionnaires were very effective in eliciting adequate information to form an evaluation.

4. Was I able to complete the project within the time frame? Yes, this objective was accomplished and the general time frame was sufficient for completion of the project.

5. How could the process have been changed to have been more effective? The questions asked in the questionnaires in some cases could have been phrased in a more closed-ended way to facilitate interpretation of responses from a statistical viewpoint.

8. FURTHER APPLICATIONS

Further application of the process would be to evaluate other programs in foreign languages, as well as in other disciplines by use of the same process. Project results could be applied in future revisions of the curriculum guide for F.L.A.

9. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Possible follow-up activities would be:

1) Conduct a similar evaluation of F.L.A. in future years.

2) Observe whether any needed changes were made as a result of the project.

3) Determine if any better communication between teachers and students resulted as a result of the study of student reactions to questionnaires. I, personally, have already benefited from the information received from the project by way of a better understanding of general student attitudes and opinions regarding the F.L.A. program.

4) Use the results of the project in counseling future teachers of F.L.A. in various aspects of the program.

5) Encourage teachers to evaluate their own effectiveness in the program as well as that of the program itself in the years to come.

6) Ascertain whether any changes were able to be effected as a result of a clarification of need for such changes.

APPENDIX A

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES OF TEACHERS OF F. L. A.

Number of Teachers Contacted: 40
Number of Teachers Responding: 28

Number of Schools Contacted: 18
Number of Schools Responding: 15

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1. How many years has the F.L.A. program been in effect in your school?

   1 year - 2 schools
   2 years - 6 schools
   3 years - 5 schools
   5 years - 2 schools

2. What is the organizational pattern of F. L. A. at your school? (Periods per week, languages offered, time spent in each, sequential pattern of languages, etc.)

   A. Senior High Schools

      2 schools - 5x/week - variety of languages offered (French, Spanish, German)

   B. Junior High Schools
      Jr. Sr. High Schools
      Middle Schools

      3 schools - 2 or 3x/week - French or Spanish offered for entire year

      6 schools - 1, 2, or 3x/week - 1/2 year French
                                   - 1/2 year Spanish

      4 schools - 2 or 3x/week - variety of languages offered (French, Spanish, Russian, German, Chinese, and/or Italian)

3. Do you feel that this is a good plan of organization? Why or Why not?

   25% - YES (wide exposure to languages and teachers is good)

   18% - YES (good to have a change at midyear)

   14% - YES (wide offering offers additional choice of languages to students)

   11% - YES (infrequent class meetings keeps the novelty aspect of the program)

   7% - NO (too much language-to-language confusion)

   7% - NO (too many class periods per language)

   4% - NO (students not prepared to know what course is about)

   4% - NO (lack of uniformity in grading among teachers)

   4% - NO (not enough materials available for time allocated for teaching the language)

4. Has the curriculum guide, Meeting Another Culture Through Language been of much help to you? Please explain your answer.

1/3 - No help at all (too difficult, too general, etc.)

1/3 - Of minimal help

1/3 - Of some help (primarily at beginning of teaching course for establishing goals and guidelines, useful in selecting cultural lessons, and for selecting activities and suggestions for games and other activities)

In most cases if the teacher felt that the guide was of no or of minimal help, the teacher had devised his or her own materials and program of study.

5. Do you feel that exposure to the F.L.A. program has affected the number of students who enroll later in the regular sequential language program?

56% - YES (has had a strong effect, both positive and negative, but for the most part positive)

22% - YES (has had some effect)

22% - YES (has had a minimal effect)

6. What has been the student response to the F.L.A. program?

47% - Had a positive response as seen in increased enrollment in sequential program and in general student enjoyment

36% - Had a neutral response (average response)

18% - Had a negative response due to the mandatory aspect of the program

7. What do you feel are the main problems in the F.L.A. program and do you have any suggestions for alleviating the problems?

32% - cited a problem in the attainment of the goals of the F.L.A. program while working with the ability and/or motivational level of many of the students

25% - suggested that more time be allotted teachers for planning for F.L.A. classes, and that more attention be given to considering the problems encountered while working with F.L.A. students (large variety of ability and interest within the same class)

25% - suggested that more consideration could be given to the curriculum to be taught

21% - felt that a greater uniformity among teachers was needed in the maintenance of student discipline and in structures and material selected for teaching

18% - felt that there is a need for more materials to be made available for the F.L.A. program, i.e. more appropriate audio-visual materials, textbooks, and art supplies

7% - suggested that classes be made smaller

7% - felt that the mandatory aspect of the F.L.A. program should be considered.

4% - felt that there is a problem in the lack of oral participation on the part of F.L.A. students

4% - felt that the F.L.A. program gives students an unrealistic impression of Level I foreign language classes

8. What do you feel are the strong points of the F.L.A. program?

60% - felt that the exposure of a greater number of students to the culture and language of other countries is a very strong point

32% - saw a strong point in the maximization of the "I can..." attitude of many students in the F.L.A. program

25% - felt that the program offers the teacher an opportunity for creativity, resourcefulness, and imagination

21% - felt that the F.L.A. program arouses an interest in and facilitates the students' choice of future foreign language course selections

7% - saw as a positive aspect the additional course selection to Level I made possible to a student with the addition of the F.L.A. program

4% - felt that the F.L.A. program helps teachers to identify those students who have a definite language potential

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES OF CURRENT STUDENTS OF F.L.A.

The F.L.A. program offered at Ridgely Junior High School is as follows: students not enrolled in the sequential programs of Level I or Level II in the 8th and 9th grades are enrolled in a program of four ten-week sessions. Languages offered are Chinese, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. Students attend three fifty-minute class periods per week.

Number of student responses: 227

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1. What have been your favorite parts of the F.L.A. program so far this year?

   26% - Speaking Activities (dialogues, vocabulary exercises, pronunciation drills, etc.)

   22% - Audio-visual Activities (movies, slides, film strips, video tapes of television programs, etc.)

   19% - Field trips (restaurants, etc.)

   16% - Cultural Activities (study of customs, geography, history, etc.)

   12% - Game Activities (bingo, crossword puzzles, unscrambles, dot-to-dot games, etc.)

   9% - Arts and Crafts Activities (coloring pictures, making greeting cards and menus, etc.)

   4% - Reports and projects

   3% - Other (including keeping a notebook, music activities, writing Chinese characters)

2. Do you like the idea of having four languages in one year? Why or why not?

   45% - YES (liked the exposure to a variety of languages, cultures, and teachers)

   30% - YES (liked the exposure to several languages as a means of helping in future foreign language course selections)

   3% - YES (no reason given)

   19% - NO (did not like the shifting of languages because it caused confusion and because not enough time was allowed for grasp of each language)

   3% - YES and NO (felt it was "okay")

   2% - NO (wanted exposure to only two languages)

   2% - NO (wanted exposure only to those languages offered in the sequential program)

1% - NO (no reason given)

3. Would you like to have F.L.A. for more than three periods a week? If so, for how many?

73% - NO (liked present program for three periods per week)

2% - NO (wanted two periods per week)

1% - NO (wanted one period per week)

1% - NO (wanted no periods per week)

11% - YES (wanted five periods per week)

5% - YES (wanted four periods per week)

4. Can you think of any changes that would improve the F.L.A. program?

21% - Liked program as is and/or offered no suggestions

18% - Suggested a greater number of field trips

10% - Suggested a greater number of movies

7% - Suggested a greater variety of activities

5% - Suggested a greater number of cultural activities

4% - Suggested a greater variety of languages be offered (including Italian and Latin)

4% - Suggested that the F.L.A. program should not be mandatory for students not enrolled in Level I or Level II

4% - Suggested that students should select which four or five languages they studied

16% - Other (including more plays, more vocabulary, smaller classes, more projects and reports, fewer languages offered, and changes in the sequential program offered)

5. Do you think that Ridgely should continue to have the F.L.A program? Why or why not?

30% - YES (liked the variety of exposure to several languages due to the fun and interest aspect)

28% - YES (liked the exposure to several languages due to the aspect of facilitating their future foreign language course selections)

11% - YES (no reason given)

11% - YES (liked the idea of having a course selection in addition to Level I)

6% - YES (liked the aspect of F.L.A. being a good reinforcement and preparation in general for further language studies)

7% - NO (no reason given)

1% - NO (felt that F.L.A. puts the student in a position behind other language students)

APPENDIX C

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES OF FORMER STUDENTS OF F.L.A.

These are students currently enrolled in Level I in the ninth grade who were enrolled in F.L.A. in the eighth grade.

Number of student responses: 157

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1. Are you glad you had F.L.A. last year? Why or why not?

56% - YES (liked the exposure to several languages as it assisted them in their selection of language presently being studied in Level I)

17% - YES (liked the fun and variety aspect of F.L.A.

10% - YES (liked the preparation and reinforcement received in F.L.A. as it helped them in their performance in Level I)

7% - YES (no reason given)

8% - NO (felt that taking F.L.A. for one year had kept them from starting their study of Level I earlier)

2% - NO (no reason given)

8% - NO (other - including idea that F.L.A. gave a false impression of Level I, that they did not like the idea of exposure to languages not offered in the sequential program, that they got the different languages confused)

2. Did F.L.A. affect your selection of a language course this year? How?

66% - YES (felt exposure to F.L.A. helped them develop a preference for language selected in Level I)

2% - YES (felt they were better prepared and had some basic prior knowledge of language studied in Level I)

2% - YES (no reason given)

15% - NO (said they had a preference for a particular language to be studied in Level I prior to exposure to F.L.A.)

13% - NO (no reason given)

2% - NO (other - including the fact that they didn't have opportunity to select preferred language and that they merely took F.L.A. for the credit given)

3. Is Level I what you thought it would be? In what ways, if any, is it different from what you expected?

52% - YES (felt Level I is as they expected it to be)

22% - NO (thought that Level I would be generally easier)

7% - NO (no reason given)

6% - NO (did not expect so much emphasis on areas of written work, including grammar and verb studies)

6% - NO (thought Level I would be harder)

4. What kinds of language programs should be offered to students?

23% - felt that current combination of choices of F.L.A. and Level I and Level II in the regular sequential program of French, Russian, and Spanish was good

17% - felt that other languages should be added to the sequential program (including Italian, Latin, Chinese, German, Portuguese, and Polish)

17% - felt that a general advanced culture course would be a good addition (including study of cooking, travel, geography, sports, etc.)

3% - felt that F.L.A. should be modified so as to allow students to select which four of the five languages they studied and in what sequence

9% - other - including only two languages to be offered in F.L.A., 1/2 year of F.L.A. and 1/2 year other, that F.L.A. be a mandatory course prior to Level I to aid in the selection of language chosen in the sequential program